

Facts About...



HIV/AIDS in Heterosexuals

SUMMARY: The proportion of HIV infections attributable to heterosexual transmission is rising in King County (5% 1993-95 versus 12% 1999-2002) and the U.S. as a whole. Heterosexually contracted HIV is the leading route of infection among women, and is more common among Persons of Color.

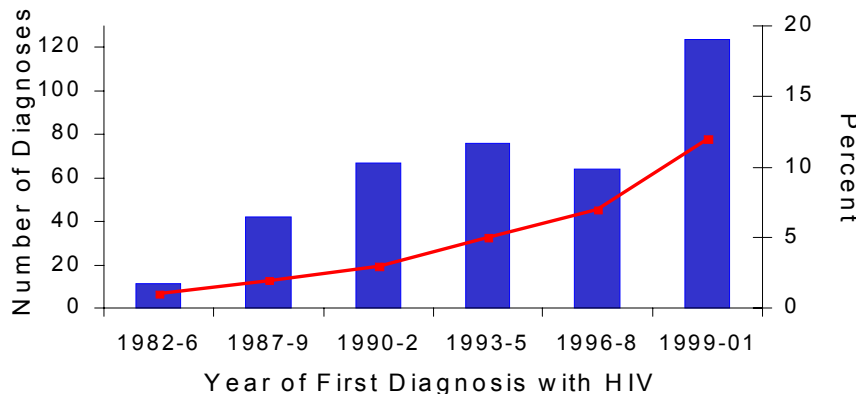
DEFINITION: For epidemiologic purposes, HIV transmission is considered heterosexually-acquired only when the infected person is a) not a male who has sex with males, b) does not inject drugs, and c) has a heterosexual partner who is an injection drug user, a bisexual male, or known to be HIV-infected. A person who identifies as heterosexual but without a specific partner at risk, is considered 'no identified risk' and is not counted as heterosexually-acquired. For this reason we may consider surveillance data to be a lowest estimate of heterosexually-acquired infection.

STATUS AND TRENDS IN HIV/AIDS CASES:

- The proportion of HIV diagnoses attributed to heterosexual transmission is increasing (Figure 1). During 1999-2001, 12% of new diagnoses of HIV infection 1999-2002 were attributed to heterosexual contact, compared with 5% of diagnoses 1993-95 (Figure 1).

- While the overall number of persons diagnosed with HIV infection is probably level at 400-500 persons each year, the number of heterosexually-transmitted HIV diagnoses continue to climb. There were over 41 diagnoses annually 1999-2001 (this number may still be incomplete), compared with just 25 each year in 1993-95.

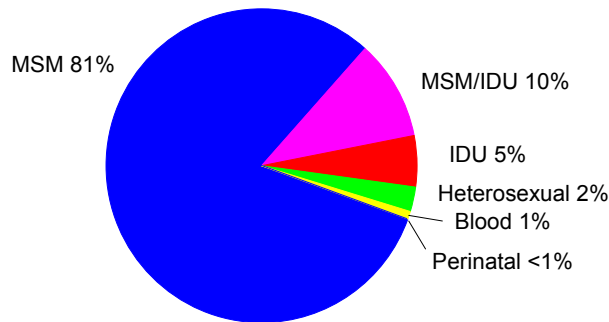
Figure 1: Number and Percent of HIV Diagnoses Among Heterosexuals, by year of diagnosis
Adjusted for Delays in Reporting



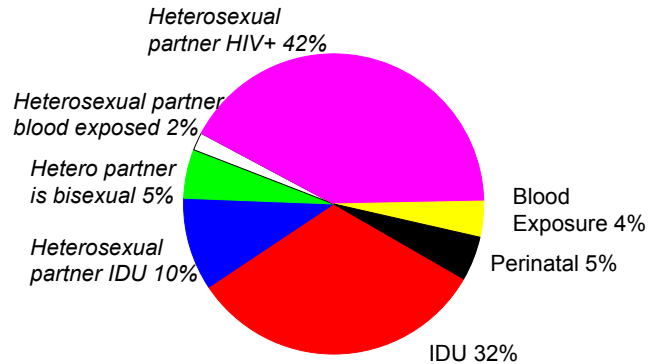
- Heterosexually transmitted cases are more common among women, African Americans, and residents of King County outside Seattle, and outside of King County - the remainder of Washington. While 26% of transmission among Blacks is heterosexual, only 4% of cases among all other races are heterosexually-acquired. The increases in heterosexual cases over time are correlated with the parallel increases among women and Blacks.
- Among persons with known risk, heterosexual transmission accounts for 59% of HIV diagnoses among women, but just 2% of diagnoses among men (see Figure 2).
- Most women infected heterosexually had a male partner who was HIV infected but whose risk was otherwise unspecified (42%). An additional 10% had male partners who injected drugs, 5% had male partners who were bisexual, and 2% had male partners infected through receipt of blood products (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: King County residents living with HIV or AIDS Through June 2002 by Gender and Exposure Category

Males, N=4,296 with known risk



Females, N=345 with known risk



POPULATION SIZE:

- The estimated King County population of 15-69 year-old heterosexuals is 1,245,000 (derived from the 2000 Census for ages 15-69, minus an estimated 40,000 exclusively MSM in these ages).

HIV PREVALENCE:

- There are an estimated 560 King County residents with heterosexually acquired HIV infection. An additional 610 HIV infections are among heterosexuals who acquired infection through use of injection drugs, and 70 infections among heterosexuals who acquired HIV through receipt of blood products.
- Based upon the populations given above, roughly 0.1% of the King County heterosexual population in the age range of 15-69 years are estimated to be HIV positive. Fewer than half of these (0.04%) are heterosexually-acquired infections.
- HIV prevalence among female and male, non drug injecting heterosexual clients seen at the Harborview Sexually-transmitted Disease Clinic (STD) in King County from 1998-99 was 0.3%. Persons attending an STD Clinic are considered at higher risk than the general population.

OTHER MEASURES OF RISK:

- Sexually transmitted diseases are an indirect indicator of unprotected sexual activity that could result in transmission of HIV. Due to more acute onset of symptoms for most other STDs compared to HIV, these data may provide more timely information on behavioral trends in the community.
- In 1998, the reported rate of sexually-transmitted gonorrhea in King County was 174 per 100,000 in 15-24 year-olds. The rate in 15-24 year-old African Americans was sixteen times greater than that in Whites of the same age.
- In 1999, King County chlamydia rates were 1,499 per 100,000 persons ages 15-19 compared to 514 per 100,000 in 25-29 year-olds. The chlamydia rate in African Americans ages 15-29 was nine times greater than that in Whites in the same age group.
- In the HIV Testing Survey conducted at a local STD clinic in 2000, half of both men and women surveyed said they never used condoms during sexual intercourse with their heterosexual partner.